

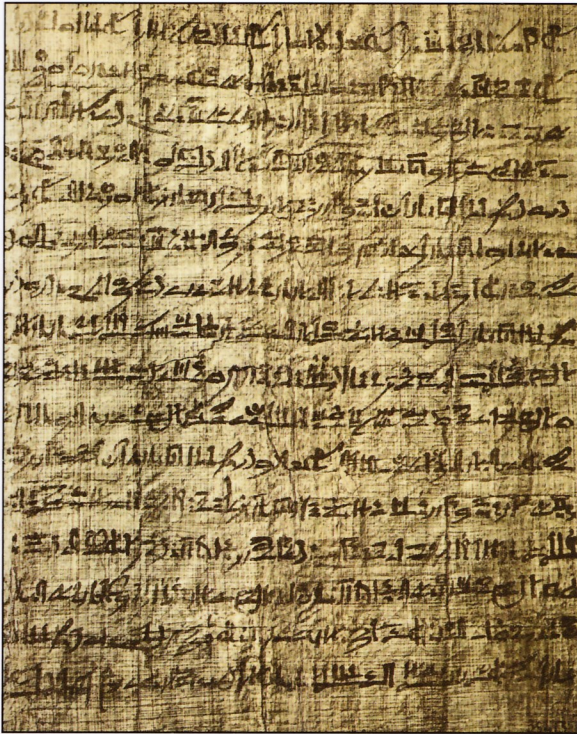
FORGOTTEN DISCOVERY

TOMB OF THE PRIESTS AND PRIESTESSES OF AMUN



Edited by Cynthia May Sheikholeslami

A RARE PAPYRUS FROM A MUMMY



CCG 58005 after Wladimir Golénischeff,
Papyrus hiératiques. Premier fascicule,
Le Caire, 1927. Plate III

An unusual and innovative religious text of the 21st Dynasty is represented in this exhibit by Papyrus CCG 58005, written in the cursive script called hieratic. It was found folded up into a rectangular packet at the neck of the mummy of the chantress of Amun Taditmut (JE 29707, A91). The text is known to Egyptologists as ‘supplementary spell 166’ to the Book of the Dead. Some examples have an introduction claiming that the text was found on the neck of a royal mummy (perhaps pharaoh Ramesses II), probably a realistic detail. Actually, the text is not attested until about 250 years after Ramesses II’s death, near the end of the 21st Dynasty (ca. 960 BC), and first on small papyri like this one, which contain only this text, rather than on Book of the Dead papyri. All the early attestations were found with mummies buried in Bab el-Gusus, attached to the neck or between the legs. Taditmut’s papyrus lacks the introductory statement found in a number of others.

What makes supplementary spell 166 unusual is that the deceased is referred to in two different ways. In the second part of the text, the deceased owner of the papyrus is referred to, as customary, by her/his name or the appropriate feminine (as in Taditmut’s papyrus) or masculine pronouns. However, surprisingly, in the first part of text, the deceased is addressed only as “your Majesty”. The first part of the text must therefore be considered as the royal part of the text. It identifies “your Majesty” (most likely the pharaoh Ramesses II) with an Osiris-like being referred to by the secret name Memremkeheb. The second part features the individual owner of the papyrus, who claims to be reciting the whole text for “your Majesty” and thus to engage herself/himself for the afterlife of the dead king. The deceased speaker asks for help from “your Majesty” in return, for instance, in ensuring that the shabtis given to the deceased effectively work for her/him.

The tomb of Ramses II in the Valley of the Kings (KV 7) was robbed at the end of the 20th Dynasty (ca. 1070 BC), and according to administrative notes found on the reused coffin in which the king’s body was ultimately found in the royal cache at Deir el-Bahari, his mummy was restored and reburied several times in the first half of the 21st Dynasty by the High Priests of Amun. Conceivably, a version of supplementary spell 166 was really found on the pharaoh’s mummy on one of these occasions. It is striking that Ramesses II’s mummy was reburied twice in connection with the burial of the High Priest of Amun Pinudjem II (ca. 970 BC) in the same cache tomb as the royal reburials, and that soon afterwards versions of the supplementary spell 166 began to turn up in the burials of the Amun priests and priestesses, descendants of Pinudjem II, in the Bab al-Gusus cache. They apparently expected some advantage from its inclusion in their burial equipment.¹

BY HARCO WILLEMS

¹ For further discussion of this rare text, see Jan-Michael Dahms, Martin Pehal and Harco Willems (2014) *Ramses II helps the dead: an interpretation of Book of the Dead supplementary chapter 166*, *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 100, 395-420.